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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 000183

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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: BOUCHER AND SPANTA TALK NEIGHBORS, COORDINATION
AND CONTACT GROUPS

Classified By: A/DCM Sara Rosenberry for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) On January 9, Assistant Secretary Boucher and Afghan Foreign Minister Spanta discussed Pakistan, cross-border jirgas, U.S. funding for Afghanistan, Iran, the Strategic Dialogue, and the U.S. proposal to energize the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board. Spanta was downbeat over recent meetings with Pakistan which he said saw "little progress." He was pleased with the establishment of the Pakistani Jirga Commission but pessimistic Pakistan would move forward quickly. Spanta asserted the border mining proposal was a political ploy as it would be impossible to actually mine the mountainous border. Boucher briefed on new U.S. funding and the supplemental budget for Afghanistan. Spanta reported that during his recent visit, the Iranian Foreign Minister has said, for the first time, that Iran could accept the presence of NATO and U.S. forces in Afghanistan as long as they were urged to leave when the job was done. Boucher explained the U.S. proposal to energize the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board through a Contact Group which would focus assistance on the role of civilian efforts and ensure that funding went to meet Afghan priorities. END SUMMARY

Pakistan and Jirgas

2. (C) Foreign Minister Spanta described recent meetings with Pakistan Foreign Minister Kasuri and Prime Minister Azziz as useful, but producing no progress on key issues -- security and the jirgas. In Spanta's January 4 meeting with Azziz, agreement was reached on three issues -- railway construction, holding the third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in Islamabad, and USD 50 million in additional aid from Pakistan. On principle, he said, President Karzai turned down an offer of 1,000 scholarships for Afghan students to study in Pakistan. Spanta explained

that during the Soviet occupation, Afghan students who studied in Moscow came back communists. Afghanistan did not want to repeat that mistake. If the Government would have accepted the offer, it would have been in for criticism from average Afghans who are angry that Pakistani insurgents have burned schools in the South which has put over 200,000 students out of school.

13. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher noted that Afghanistan had accepted 1,400 scholarships from Iran over the past several years and 1,000 from India. He said he could understand concerns about possible negative public reaction, but thought that if the Afghan Government carefully chose the schools for its students, there should be less concern. Spanta quipped that there were already enough Pakistani ISI officers in Afghanistan.

14. (C) Spanta welcomed the formation of the Pakistani Jirga Commission. He hoped that a meeting could be scheduled soon, but was skeptical. Boucher said he would encourage Pakistan to meet early; the two sides should be able to work through their different versions of the jirgas. Spanta agreed, noting that the Afghan proposal was not dogma. He said Afghanistan was ready to find a compromise but questioned whether Pakistan was ready to bring the two peoples together. Spanta reiterated the Afghan position that it wanted all Pashtuns to be invited -- secular, nationalists, and religious, not just the fundamentalists. He urged active participation from both the U.S and United Nations. The U.S., in particular, was important for confidence building -- not just as an observer, but as a participant. Boucher explained that the U.S. is happy to help but needs both sides to agree and to propose a specific role for us.

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15. (C) Boucher asked if there were other areas for practical cooperation, for example on border issues or economics. Spanta stressed that mining the border was unacceptable to Afghanistan. Separation of families would create a situation similar to East and West Berlin or North and South Korea. Afghanistan already had 2 million invalids in the country as a result of mining, Spanta said. The Ottawa Convention's goal was to end mining, and Spanta said he was going to be writing the United Nations Secretary General. (Note: He did so subsequently; text is being translated and will be faxed to Department). Spanta pointed to the practical difficulties of mining a border that was mostly mountainous. He asserted that the proposal was purely political in nature to signal a willingness to take action that could never be implemented. Afghanistan was willing to accept a system of border crossing cards and also willing to accept its refugees back.

16. (C) Boucher said he would continue to encourage that Afghanistan and Pakistan take every possible opportunity to talk and deal with the issues. He reported that Kasuri had returned to Pakistan after his meetings in Kabul encouraged by the jirga discussions. Spanta agreed, adding that the next meeting with Kasuri would take place in March and that the two intended to meet quarterly. This is the only choice we have, said Spanta, sometimes confrontation was needed to work things out.

U.S. Funding/Supplemental Budget

17. (C) Boucher explained that the U.S. was gearing up for a major push on assistance and that a supplemental budget was in the works. A public announcement was expected at President Bush's State of the Union Address, and Secretary Rice will provide more details at the January 26 NATO Foreign Ministers meeting. Final numbers would be unveiled in February. Boucher stated that the goal was to help push the Afghan Government and economic benefits out to all parts of the country. The focus would be on training and equipping the Afghan National Army and Police, roads and construction,

governance, government centers, and more training.

¶18. (C) In addition, the U.S. was making a big push with the Europeans and in several international fora and upcoming meetings, Boucher stated. These included the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels, the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board and Political Directors meetings in Berlin, and the G-8 meeting in June. The aim is to get the Europeans to step up to the plate and to ensure resources go behind Afghan priorities. Secretary Rice can help set the agenda for the Foreign Ministers meeting by calling for a comprehensive military-economic-governance package. Another goal will be to eliminate NATO caveats.

¶19. (C) Boucher expressed his disappointment with the European Union budget. He welcomed its seven-year commitment but objected to the planned decrease in annual funding. The U.S. will be pushing individual member states to make up for the decrease through greater bilateral assistance. Spanta agreed that the Europeans could do more. He criticized France for its "insignificant" contributions and suggested the Germans could also do more. Boucher said the Germans and others were claiming "we have no money" but were trying to make up for it by providing more people for training.

Strategic Dialogue

¶10. (C) Spanta briefed on the latest Afghan preparations for the next Strategic Dialogue meeting. He said that on January 25 the Afghan Government would hold a workshop to better prepare internally for the upcoming bilateral with the U.S. Boucher emphasized that the U.S. was intent on holding the

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next meeting but regretted that scheduling senior State Department officials' travel had become difficult without a Deputy Secretary. With the nomination of Ambassador Negroponte, scheduling issues should be easier to work out in the future.

¶11. (C) Spanta announced that Afghanistan wants to sign a Common Declaration with the U.S. after the next Strategic Dialogue meeting. He stressed that it would have an important psychological impact in Afghanistan. Boucher said the U.S. would be happy to do it. Spanta stated that it could be done in Kabul where it would make a strong statement or Washington if need be. The goal is to do the signing at a very senior level.

Iran

¶12. (C) Spanta briefed Boucher on Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki's recent visit to Afghanistan. Spanta noted that the two countries had two Commissions, one for cultural and one for economic cooperation. Both countries shared a common position on the need for good governance and rebuilding Afghanistan. Spanta reported that Mottaki told him for the first time that Iran understood and accepted the presence of NATO and Coalition Forces in Afghanistan but urged that they should leave Afghanistan when the job was done. Spanta noted that this was a departure from previous Iranian statements which called on the West to leave Afghanistan immediately. Spanta stressed the importance of good relations with Iran with whom Afghanistan shared a common language and religion. He believed that, to win the war on terror, it was unacceptable not to have relations with Iran. Spanta said he stressed to his Iranian counterpart that Iran should not attempt to break Afghanistan away from the U.S.

¶13. (C) Boucher noted there are many different Irans; while Iran is also very concerned about narcotics and worked hard to secure its borders, there were elements that were also pushing drugs, both for money and to undermine the West. He asked if the regional cooperation agreements were working.

Spanta believed that the agreements worked well and pointed to the planned railway from Iran to Herat which would continue into Central Asia.

Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board

¶14. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher briefed on recent developments following the French proposal for a Contact Group. He explained that this stemmed from the problem of civilian efforts not being visible enough. Europeans needed to see that civilian efforts were part of an integrated and coordinated plan. The U.S. did not see the need for another new group but wanted something that would ensure support and direct money into the right pockets. We see benefits, therefore, in a "Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board Contact Group" as a complement to the regular Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board process in Kabul. The Group would meet perhaps 1-2 times per year in capitals and focus on funding and needs. Officials from capitals would help direct priorities, although the Afghan National Development Strategy would be the roadmap. Meetings will help keep the pressure on capitals. Spanta noted that the Finance Minister was not clear on the new Contact Group and was concerned that new institutions and more meetings were being proposed. Boucher said he was impressed with the Afghan delegation at the Delhi donors conference as the Afghans had successfully driven the agenda and meeting. He hoped that the same could be done in the spring meetings, particularly in Berlin. Boucher wanted Presidential Senior Economic Advisor Naderi, supported by the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, to drive the process and set the priorities for the international community.

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¶15. (U) SCA Senior Advisor Caitlin Hayden cleared this cable.

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